November 16 — A bad day for British actors

On average, something like two people worldwide die every second of the day. Some of us die unmourned or even unnoticed. Some are remembered for good reason, or for entirely the wrong one.

Clarke Pearce.

For some reason or none, November 16 appears to be a bad day for British actors.

Arthur Askey, Reg Varney and Edward Woodward all died on November 16.

The diminutive Arthur Askey was a well known comedian. At only 5 foot 2 he punched well above his weight, starred in a number of films, and had an intermittent recording career. His catchphrase was “Hello playmates!” Liverpudlian Arthur died in London on November 16, 1982 aged 82.

Comedy actor Arthur Askey.

While Arthur Askey lived to a fair old age, comedy actor Reg Varney bested him by ten years, dying on November 16, 2008. Varney served a long apprenticeship in clubs and the music hall before breaking into television in 1961. Although he made a number of films, he was best known as a TV actor, including situation comedy.

Edward Woodward, who died November 16, 2009, was an entirely different kind of actor. Graduating from the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts, he acted in a succession of stage, film and TV roles, mostly serious and sometimes sinister, including the TV series *Callan*, in which he played the lead as a slightly off-beat spy, and the film for which he is best known, the 1973 low budget psychological horror flick *The Wicker Man*.

Like Arthur Askey, Woodward was known to burst into song on occasion, and recorded among other numbers, an early John/Taupin composition, *The Tide Will Turn For Rebecca*.

We finish with two Clarks, one of whom was an American. Hollywood actor Clark Gable had a somewhat shorter life than the above; he died November 16, 1960, aged only 59, ten days after suffering a heart attack. He acted almost entirely in films, and was busy up until his death. His biggest role was the 1939 box office smash *Gone With The Wind* in which he ended the film with the classic line "Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn".

The second Clark was born nearly 4 years after the death of the first. Although his birth name was Clark Edward Pearce, he added an e to his first name at some point. Clarke Pearce died in a Birmingham hospital in the small hours of November 16, 1986, aged only 22. Unlike the others listed here, he was not an actor on either the big screen or TV, although also unlike the others he did have a snooker trophy named after him. Clarke Pearce was an ordinary working man, a postman, but he was proficient at snooker, and well liked by his workmates. Alone among these five, he suffered a violent death. Although he was no actor, the man who stabbed him in the back with a flick knife, was. Satpal Ram was convicted of Clarke's murder the following year, and sentenced to life imprisonment at Birmingham Crown Court.

Clark Gable.

He spent years protesting his innocence in the face of overwhelming evidence of guilt, and his supporters recruited a small army of people including celebrities, politicians and even lawyers to lie on his behalf. One group of braindeads even wrote a song for him, *Free Satpal Ram*.

You can read some of the background to my involvement with exposing the truth about this senseless murder to Britain and the world in the face of a years' long campaign of lies in this article which was published earlier this month. If you want to learn even more, you will find therein a link to the website *satpalramisguilty* which has now been on-line for over a decade.

Mr Ram's shameless cries of innocence did not fall on deaf ears, and the unrepentant murderer and shameless liar was parolled in June 2002 but was soon recalled to prison for breaching the terms of his life licence. He was not arrested however until April 2005, after which no more was heard of him.

That was still the situation on November 4 when I published the aforementioned article, but last night when I spoke to Clarke's sister on the phone for the first time in a few years, she told me that her brother's murderer is still in prison, and that although he will at some point be transferred to an open prison, he won't be back on the streets for some time yet.

November 16 may have been a bad day for Clarke Pearce – the worst and final day of his life – but a quarter of a century on, as he looks down from his cloud, he has one small mercy to be thankful for.

[The above was published originally November 16, 2011.]